

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0517

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CSCE, XG, AU, SHUM

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN PROPOSAL FOR PRIVATE EAST-WEST ROUND TABLE ON
CSCE IN VIENNA, MARCH 25-26.

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENTARIAN CZERNETZ INFORMED US JANUARY 14 HE HAS MOUNTED INITIATIVE FOR PRIVATE ROUND TABLE OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS TO DISCUSS CSCE MATTERS, VIENNA, MARCH 25-26. ACCORDING TO CZERNETZ, COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WILL PROBABLY COME AND EUROPE COUNCIL COUNTRIES ARE ALSO LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE. BELATEDLY HE HAS ASKED FOR USG AND CONGRESSIONAL REACTION AND WHETHER US CONGRESS REPS MIGHT PARTICIPATE. AS INITIAL REACTION WE POINTED OUT TO HIM AND ALSO TO AUSTRIAN MFA OUR CONCERNS ABOUT TECHNICAL AND SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEMS SUCH GATHERING WOULD PRESENT FOR US AND THAT GUIDANCE FROM WASHINGTON WOULD BE REQUESTED.

2. KARL CZERNETZ, CHAIRMAN OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT AND PRESIDENT OF PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF COUNCIL OF EUROPE (COE), INFORMED US JANUARY 14 THAT HE EXPECTS SOVIET UNION AND OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST STATES TO AGREE TO ACCEPT INVITATIONS TO A "ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION BETWEEN EUROPEAN POLITICANS FROM EAST AND WEST" IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FINAL ACT

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OF HELSINKI TO BE HELD AT VIENNA MARCH 25-26, 1977.
HE SAID MAYOR OF VIENNA, LEOPOLD GRATZ, HAD AGREED TO EXTEND FORMAL INVITATIONS TO REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL LIFE FROM EUROPEAN STATES TAKING PART IN CSCE TO PRIVATE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS THAT WOULD NOT GIVE RISE TO ANY COMMITMENTS, TAKE ANY DECISIONS OR PASS ANY RESOLUTIONS. HE ASKED WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF USG

WOULD BE TO SUCH A GATHERING AND WHETHER REPRESENTATIVES OF US CONGRESS WOULD AGREE TO ATTEND.

3. CZERNETZ SAID HIS INITIATIVE HAD GROWN OUT OF EFFORTS SINCE 1974 OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF COE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST AT PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL. UNTIL LATE LAST YEAR SOVIETS HAD REJECTED ALL SUCH OVERTURES ON BASIS THAT THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE COE AND HAD ALSO TURNED A DEAF EAR TO PROPOSALS THAT DIALOGUE COULD TAKE PLACE OUTSIDE COE FRAMEWORK. CZERNETZ SAID THAT LAST OCTOBER, HOWEVER, DURING THIS VISIT TO WARSAW AS CHAIRMAN OF THE AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE (ALTHOUGH HE WAS ACCCOMPANIED BY HIS COE CHEF DE CABINET, DR. MARCZAND, AND THE TRIP WAS PAID BY THE COE), INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY OF POLITBUREAU AND CHAIRMAN OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF POLISH PARLIAMENT, DR. FRELIC, INDICATED EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES HAD BEEN RECONSIDERING IDEA OF EAST-WEST ROUND TABLE AND WOULD PROBABLY ACCEPT INVITATIONS TO TWO-DAY MEETING AT VIENNA IN WHICH FIRST DAY WOULD BE DEVOTED TO GENERAL DISCUSSION OF HELSINKI FINAL ACT AND SECOND TO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS, SUCH AS CULTURAL EXCHANGES, COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND RESEARCH, ETC. FOLLOWING FURTHER SOUNDINGS WITH SOVIET AND OTHER EAST EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS IN VIENNA AND FURTHER CONSULTATIONS IN THE COE, CZERNETZ, AGAIN IN HIS AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY, ON DECEMBER 6 ADDRESSED LETTERS (TEXT BY SEPTEL) TO AMBASSADORS OF ALL COMMUNIST COUNTRIES THAT PARTICIPATED IN CSCE AND TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESIDENT OF THE FINNISH PARLIAMENT (VIA FINNISH EMBASSY) SOLICITING VIEWS OF "APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES" IN THOSE COUNTRIES ABOUT POSSIBLE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VIENNA ON MARCH 25-26.

4. CZERNETZ SAID THE SOVIET COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY TOLD HIM JANUARY 4 THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS, IN GENERAL, FAVORABLE INCLINED TOWARD PROPOSED ROUND TABLE, ALTHOUGH SOME PROBLEMS (OTHERWISE UNSPECIFIED) MIGHT HAVE TO BE RESOLVED. CZERNETZ SAID THAT HE HAD NOT HEARD FURTHER FROM SOVIETS BUT THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO INQUIRE OF SOVIET COUNSELOR BEFORE DEPARTING FOR STRASBOURG JANUARY 22 TO REPORT TO COE. CZERNETZ THEN ASKED WHETHER, IN EVENT OF AN AFFIRMATIVE SOVIET REPLY, AS EXPECTED, HE SHOULD INFORM SOVIETS THAT INVITATIONS WOULD BE EXTENDED TO PARLIAMENTS OF THE WEST EUROPEAN STATES, UNITED STATES AND CANADA. CZERNETZ SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL IF HE COULD SAY THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF US CONGRESS WERE PREPARED

TO PARTICIPATE AND ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE
TO HAVE US GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS ABOUT SUCH A ROUND TABLE
AND AN INDICATION OF CONGRESS'S RESPONSE TO SUCH AN
INVITATION BEFORE HE SAW THE SOVIET COUNSELOR.

5. EMBOFF REGISTERED SURPRISE THAT CZERNETZ AND COE
HAD NOT CONSULTED EITHER USG REPRESENTATIVES OR US
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS DIRECTLY AT EARLIER STAGE. (CZERNETZ
REPLIED RATHER LAMELY THAT CONGRESSIONAL OBSERVERS
HAD NOT ATTENDED COE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY MEETING IN
SEPTEMBER AND COE PARLIAMENTARIANS HAD THOUGHT IT
IMPOSSIBLE TO COORDINATE WITH USG AND CONGRESS DURING
ELECTION CAMPAIGN.) EMBOFF NOTED FURTHER THAT CHANGE
OF ADMINISTRATION WAS IMMINENT IN WASHINGTON AND
EXPRESSED DOUBT THEREFORE THAT REPLIES FROM WASHINGTON
COULD BE RECEIVED BEFORE JANUARY 22. HE SAID, HOWEVER,

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02
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THAT EMBASSY WOULD CERTAINLY FORWARD HIS INQUIRY TO
DEPARTMENT, ALONG WITH COPY OF TEXT OF HIS LETTER OF
DECEMBER THAT HE HAD PROVIDED. EMBOFF ALSO NOTED STRONG
USG OPPOSITION TO PAST SOVIET EFFORTS TO ENGAGE WEST
EUROPEANS IN DISCUSSIONS OF SECURITY AND COOPERATION
IN EUROPE TO THE EXCLUSION OF US AND CANADA. IT WOULD,

THEREFORE, CERTAINLY NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE PROPOSED ROUND TABLE TO BE HELD WITHOUT INVITING AMERICAN AND CANADIAN PARTICIPATION OR TO LEAVE THE SOVIET COUNSELOR WITH IMPRESSION THAT ONLY EUROPEAN STATES, AS CZERNETZ LETTER HAD SEEMED TO IMPLY, WERE TO BE INVITED. EMBOFF POINTED OUT ALSO THAT US CONGRESS WAS SEPARATE AND EQUAL BRANCH OF US GOVERNMENT AND, WHATEVER EXECUTIVE BRANCH VIEWS OF THIS SPECIFIC INITIATIVE MIGHT BE, EXECUTIVE BRANCH COULD ONLY ADVISE CONGRESS OF ITS POSITION AND IN NO WAY INTERPOSE ITSELF BETWEEN ORGANIZERS OF SUCH A ROUND TABLE AND CONGRESS.

6. LATER SAME DAY (JANUARY 14) WE RAISED WITH SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL CZERNETZ'S INITIATIVE AND, AFTER SUMMARIZING CZERNETZ'S PRESENTATION TO US, REGISTERED SAME GENERAL POINTS AS HAD BEEN DONE WITH CZERNETZ (NO CONTACT WITH US IN EARLY STAGE OF INITIATIVE, ROUND TABLE CAST AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEETING OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS ON CSCE MATTERS, EFFORTS OF SOVIETS IN PAST TO EXCLUDE US FROM SECURITY INTERESTS RE EUROPE). ADDITIONAL POINTS MADE WERE 1) THAT US PARLIAMENTARIANS HAD TRIED EARLIER TO VISIT EE COUNTRIES AND SOVIET UNION FOR JUST SUCH CONVERSATIONS BUT WERE REFUSED VISAS; 2) THAT PROPOSED ROUND TABLE UNLESS VERY CAREFULLY PREPARED COULD BECOME EE PROPAGANDA EXERCISE WHICH COULD PREJUDICE BELGRADE MEETINGS, AND 3) THAT WHILE WE WOULD FORWARD TEXT OF CZERNETZ LETTER TO WASHINGTON, REACTION OF GOA TO CZERNETZ INITIATIVE WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR US ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS IN DEVELOPING POSITION.

7. MFA OFFICIAL INDICATED THAT MFA WAS ONLY AWARE IN GENERAL TERMS OF CZERNETZ'S INITIATIVE AND HAD IMPRESSION FROM CONVERSATION IN NOVEMBER THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY TO BE REALIZED, AS HAD EARLIER CZERNETZ EFFORT VIA IPU. SOURCE REGISTERED SOME SURPRISE THAT INITIATIVE HAD ADVANCED SO FAR AND THAT IN ADDITION CONTACT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED AT SUCH LATE STAGE WITH USG. HIS COMMENTS SUGGESTED HE CONSIDERED CZERNETZ ENDEAVOR TO BE ILL-CONCEIVED AND HAPHAZARD UNDERTAKING. HE SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS MATTER WITH FOREIGN MINISTER UPON LATTER'S RETURN TO VIENNA AND BE IN TOUCH WITH US LATER WITH MORE FORMAL GOA REACTION.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: WE DO NOT INTEND AT THIS TIME TO RAISE CZERNETZ'S INITIATIVE WITH EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN VIENNA SINCE WE ARE UNABLE TO GAUGE SERIOUSNESS OF SUPPORT IN WEST AND LIKELIHOOD OF

SUCCESS OF CZERNETZ INITIATIVE. IN LATTER CONNECTION
KEY FACTOR, IT SEEMS TO US, WILL BE REACTION OF EC-9
AND US AND CANADA TO CZERNETZ PROPOSAL. EMBASSY
WOULD THEREFORE APPRECIATE EARLY GUIDANCE ON
ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL VIEWS ON PROPOSED
ROUND TABLE IN VIENNA. DEPARTMENT REQUESTED DISTRIBUTE
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THIS MESSAGE TO OTHER POSTS, AS APPROPRIATE.BUCHANAN

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Message Attributes

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